

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 08795 190419 Z

10

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12 IO-12

AID-20 RSR-01 /114 W

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P R 190300 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1862

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 8795

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR MAY 18, 1973 (MR4)

THE FOLLOWING SENT SAIGON FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO 18 MAY 73,
REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION AND INFO

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L CAN THO 0330

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MOPS, PINT, VS

SUBJECT: SITREP FOR MAY 18, 1973

1. SUMMARY VC/ NVA ATTEMPTS TO FURTHER SECURE COMMO- LIAISON
ROUTES MAY ACCOUNT FOR THE INCREASED FIGHTING IN CHUONG
THIEN. A CASUALTY RECOVERY MISSION IN VINH BINH GIVES
UP ITS SEARCH FOR A SUSPECTED CRASH SITE. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY SITUATION: (A) FIGHTING IN MR IV TOOK NO
HOLIDAY ON BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY MAY 17 AS 44 VC/ NVA- INITIATED
INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN THE DELTA. CHUONG THIEN AGAIN RECEIVED
MOST OF THE PUNISHMENT WITH 27 INCIDENTS REPORTED. DELTA-
WIDE, THERE WERE SEVEN GROUND ASSAULTS, 27 ATTACKS BY FIRE,
EIGHT HARRASSMENTS, ONE ACT OF SABOTAGE AND THE ASSASSINATION
OF A HAMLET CHIEF IN SOUTHERN VINH BINH. GVN FORCES LOST
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 08795 190419 Z

EIGHT KILLED, 80 WOUNDED, AND ONE CAPTURED, WHILE VC/NVA LOSSES WERE 36 KILLED AND FOUR CAPTURED. FIVE CIVILIANS DIED.

(B) THE CHUONG THIEN SECTOR COMMAND HAS MADE AVAILABLE ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON THE COSTLY MAY 13 REGIONAL FORCE UNIT AMBUSH (CAN THO 0316). THE INCIDENT OCCURRED ON PROVINCE ROUTE 31 JUST WEST OF HOA LUU VILLAGE, DUC LONG DISTRICT. THE VC HAD OVERRUN AN OUTPOST THE NIGHT BEFORE, AND THE REGIONAL FORCE GROUP-- MADE UP OF THE CHAU DOC 988 AND 497 RF COMPANIES TOGETHER WITH A FEW DUC LONG POPULAR FORCES-- WERE EN ROUTE TO RECOVER THE POST WHEN THEY WALKED INTO A CLASSIC VC TRAP. SIX GOVERNMENT SOLDIERS DIED AND 21 ARE MISSING. THE FLEEING SURVIVORS LEFT BEHIND TWO M60 MACHINE GUNS, A 60 MM MORTAR, EIGHT M79 S, 39 M16 S, AND SEVEN PRC-25 RADIOS.

3. COMMUNIST ACTIVITY: (A) THE VC/NVA HAVE INFLICTED HEAVY PUNISHMENT UPON CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. OTHER NORMALLY HOT PROVINCES-- DINH TUONG, CHAU DOC, THE HONG NGU DISTRICT OF KIEN PHONG-- HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY QUIET. THE VC/NVA APPEAR TO BE CONSOLIDATING THEIR EXISTING GAINS AND IMPROVING THE SUPPLY AND COMMUNICATION ROUTES THROUGH THE PROVINCE BY WHICH THEY INFILTRATE MEN AND MATERIAL FROM CAMBODIA AND THE U MINH FOREST THROUGHOUT THE SOUTHERN DELTA.

(B) GENERALLY ESCHEWING LARGE SCALE GROUND ASSAULTS, THE VC/NVA IN CHUONG THIEN HAVE BEEN POUNDING AWAY AT GVN OUTPOSTS AND OTHER FIXED POSITIONS WITH 107 MM ROCKETS, 82 AND 62 MM MORTARS, AND 57 MM RECOILESS RIFLES. VC/NVA ATTACKS APPEAR TO BE DESIGNED TO PUNISH AND DEMORALIZE THE GVN DEFENDERS AT MINIMUM COST TO THEMSELVES. SIMILARLY IN DINH TUONG DURING THE LAST SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS WE HAVE NOTED A SHARP INCREASE IN THE RATE OF INDIRECT FIRE DIRECTED AGAINST RVNAF POSITIONS, PRIOR TO THIS TIME THE VC/NVA FIRED TWO TO THREE ROUNDS PER ATTACK; SINCE THEN A MINIMUM OF TEN AND AS HIGH AS TWENTY TO THIRTY ROUNDS ARE FIRED. THE VC/NVA IN ADDITION RETURN TO ATTACK AS MANY AS FIVE TO SIX DAYS IN SUCCESSION.

(C) VC/NVA INFILTRATION MAY BE ANOTHER EXPLANATION FOR THE INCREASED INTENSITY AND NUMBER OF CHUONG THIEN ATTACKS BY FIRE. TO SCREEN INFILTRATION AND DRAW RVNAF AWAY FROM COMMO- LIAISON ROUTES, THE VC/NVA HAVE TRADITIONALLY ATTACKED AREAS FAR FROM THEIR SUPPLY LINES. THE HEAVY HARASSMENT OF DUC LONG DISTRICT AND THE PROVINCE CAPITAL OF VI THANH SUGGESTS
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PAGE 03 SAIGON 08795 190419 Z

AN ATTEMPT TO DRAW THE 21 ST ARVN DIVISION TO THE DEFENSE OF THESE PLACES, WHICH ARE SOME DISTANCE FROM CHUONG THIEN'S VC INFILTRATION ROUTES. THE PROVINCE CHIEF TOLD THE US PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE THAT THE CONCENTRATION OF VC/NVA FORCES AROUND HOA LUU VILLAGE WAS TO SUPPORT THE INFILTRATION OF ABOUT 500 NVA COMING FROM KIEN GIANG.

(D) PRESENT VC/NVA TACTICS ARE CONSISTENT WITH PAST BEHAVIOR

IN CHUONG THIEN, AND THEY REFLECT THE LARGE AMOUNTS OF MATERIAL AND POSSIBLY MEN INFILTRATED INTO THE PROVINCE SINCE THE CEASEFIRE. WITH VITAL INFILTRATION ROUTES CONVERGING IN THE PROVINCE, THE HEAVY FIGHTING IN CHUONG THIEN MAY BE PRIMARILY A COMMUNIST EFFORT TO KEEP OPEN ITS GATEWAY TO THE CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN DELTA.

4. JMT: THE MAY 17 CASUALTY RECOVERY MISSION TO VINH BINH PRODUCED NO RESULTS. THE CASUALTY TEAM CONDUCTED A DETAILED SEARCH OF THE SUSPECTED 1970 CRASH SITE AND QUESTIONED LOCAL RESIDENTS. NO ONE REMEMBERED THE CREASH AND METAL DETECTORS PRODUCED NO RESULTS. ACCORDINGLY THE TEAM HAS GIVEN UP ITS SEARCH. THE BAC LIEU CASUALTY RECOVERY MISSION WILL WRAP UP ITS ACTIVITIES TODAY AND TOGETHER WITH THE VINH BINH GROUP WILL RETIRE. NO FURTHER MR IV SEARCHES ARE PLANNED FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS.

WISNER UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

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